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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001649

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TAGS: PREL UN IZ

SUBJECT: CLARIFYING THE UN ROLE IN IRAQ

REF: BAGHDAD 1554

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Acting Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) Michael Schulenburg told the

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Ambassador May 18 that UNAMI urgently needs a new UN resolution to update and expand its mandate. Schulenburg described what he termed a lack of political will at the UN as the most significant obstacle to a new resolution. As part of its new mandate, he proposed that UNAMI mediate the dispute over the status of Kirkuk and the boundaries of the Kurdish region. A new resolution must also stipulate provision to UNAMI of much-needed resources, including air assets and secure office and housing structures. Schulenburg also argued vehemently against referenda on Kirkuk and the constitution, and against early provincial elections. END SUMMARY.

CLARIFYING THE UN ROLE IN IRAQ

¶2. (C) Schulenburg told the Ambassador May 18 that the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) urgently requires a new United Nations (UN) resolution to update and clarify its mandate. Resolution 1546, Schulenburg explained, delineates a temporary role for UNAMI during Iraq's transition to sovereignty, which has come to an end. He argued that a new resolution could elucidate UNAMI's role and establish its independence from coalition forces.

¶3. (C) Schulenburg proposed that a new resolution address three key questions:

-- What is the proper role for the UN in Iraq?
-- How can the UN improve its credibility in Iraq?
-- What infrastructure does the UN require to accomplish its mission in Iraq?

He then proceeded to answer these questions. The UN can serve as a mediator for seemingly intractable disputes, such as the status of Kirkuk. It can offer technical expertise for difficult procedures, such as voter registration. It can support the reconstruction and reconciliation activities of coalition partners, such as UN provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) to complement coalition PRTs.

¶4. (C) Successful accomplishment of these roles would improve UN credibility in Iraq, Schulenburg said, but he stressed that UNAMI cannot succeed without improved infrastructure. A new resolution must stipulate provision to UNAMI of much-needed resources, including air assets and secure office and housing structures. The UN currently pays one million dollars per month to rent a Danish C-130, which has proved inadequate for UNAMI's needs. Currently, Schulenburg said,

UNAMI staff members require approximately 10 - 12 days to enter or leave Iraq, since they often rely on transportation from coalition forces. More importantly, Schulenburg explained, UNAMI staff members lack the capacity to travel around Iraq to carry out their work.

¶ 15. (C) The Ambassador concurred that "we need a UNAMI here that is more robust, better resourced, better staffed, and more expansive." He expressed support for a new UN resolution. "If a new resolution would help solidify thinking about UNAMI in New York," he said, "then it's another reason to support it."

OBSTACLES TO A NEW UN RESOLUTION

¶ 16. (C) Schulenburg described what he termed a lack of political will as the most significant obstacle to a new resolution. He averred that some UN officials and delegations continue to view the crisis in Iraq "as an opportunity to create a failure" for the USG. This attitude, he said, has caused the steady deterioration of UNAMI resources and staffing. He said that some officials have used security concerns as an excuse to weaken UNAMI. "Our reaction to security is sometimes a cover for political motives." Nonetheless, the UN has failed to meet UNAMI's basic security needs. Schulenburg requested funding to provide UNAMI safer buildings. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno and Under-Secretary-General for Management Alicia Barcena Ibarra told him that they would send his request to the General Assembly for decision. Schulenburg expressed contempt for this answer, which he said will significantly delay decision. He worried that the UN will keep UNAMI in place without supporting it.

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¶ 17. (C) Schulenburg proposed that the UN, UK and US missions in Iraq hold regular "tripartite" meetings. He suggested that this group could produce first draft of a new resolution.

KIRKUK: UN MEDIATION SHOULD PRECEDE REFERENDUM

¶ 18. (C) Schulenburg said that the Government of Iraq (GOI) must answer four central questions before it can administer a fair and credible referendum on the status of Kirkuk:

- What specifically will the referendum ask people?
- How will the referendum define "disputed territories?"
- Who will vote? (Only residents of "disputed territory?" Or all citizens of Iraq?)
- What size majority will decide the outcome? (Will it be 51 percent? A two-thirds majority?)

It remains unclear, Schulenburg said, who will answer these questions. He described the planned referendum as a "hostile referendum" because it comes at the beginning rather than the end of a political process. "It is winner takes all," he said. "A referendum would be far more effective if it come after a negotiation process, to affirm the results."

¶ 19. (C) Nonetheless, Kurdish leaders fear that if they postpone the election then it will never take place. "We need to help them let go of the referendum by offering them a Plan B," Schulenburg said. His "Plan B" involves UN mediation. He argued that by negotiating the status of Kirkuk and granting concessions rather than seeking total control, the Kurds will attain less power in Kirkuk than they currently seek, but they will retain linguistic and cultural influence in the city. A UN-brokered agreement could help ensure that Turks, Iranians, and Arabs will not contest the Kurdish presence in the city. The agreement will also derive

international sanction from the UN role as mediator. This same process could help establish the final administrative boundaries of the Kurdish region.

¶10. (C) Schulenburg asked to know the US position on the UN role as mediator for Kirkuk. The Ambassador said the US has not yet taken a firm position on how to proceed with Kirkuk. The Ambassador acknowledged the challenges inherent in holding a referendum by the end of the year, but also cited the difficulties faced by Kurdish leaders who equate delay with denial of their right to a referendum.

¶11. (C) The Iranians, Schulenburg claimed, have said they would welcome a constructive UN role in resolving the Kirkuk impasse. The Turks, however, appear divided on the issue. Turkish diplomats in New York said they supported the idea of UN mediation, according to Schulenburg. The Turkish Ambassador to Iraq, however, expressed hostility to a UN role; the Ambassador did not give reason for his opposition, Schulenburg said. Turkey's Special Representative to Iraq Oguz Celikkol also expressed opposition to a UN role, warning Schulenburg that "the UN should not burn its fingers by getting involved in Kurdish issues." (NOTE: Schulenburg reported that Celikkol will be visit Iraq May 25. END NOTE.)

CONSTITUTION: REFERENDUM COULD UNDERMINE RECONCILIATION

12) (C) Reconciliation, Schulenburg said, depends on creation of a sound constitution. He expressed concern, however, that a referendum on the constitution could prove divisive if one group rejects it. He cautioned against an early referendum while urging progress with the constitutional process, and offered UNAMI assistance with technical-level discussions.

PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS: DELAY THE VOTE

¶13. (C) Schulenburg also warned against early provincial elections. He worried that provincial elections, if not properly organized, could "fly in your face" and open "a Pandora's box" of violence and fragmentation. National elections, he said, generally prove easier to organize than do provincial or local elections. "The smaller the units in an election the tougher it is to carry out," he explained. The GOI has not maintained the public distribution system (PDS) in the face of massive population displacement; Schulenburg estimated that 20% of the population has fled their homes. He asserted that the technical problem of registering voters could undermine the credibility of early provincial elections. Provincial elections in Baghdad, he said, will be "extremely difficult" to organize.

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